

Defending Childhood Initiative – Network for Overcoming Violence 2011-2016 Executive Summary

About

The Defending Childhood Initiative locally called the DCI-Network for Overcoming Violence and Abuse or DCI- NOVA, works to help children and their families who have been exposed to violence or abuse. Shelby County is one of eight sites chosen by the U.S. Department of Justice for the initiative, created to address the impact of violence on children as both victims and witnesses.

Studies show the majority of children in the United States have been exposed to violence, crime or abuse, which is often associated with long-term physical, psychological and emotional harm, increasing their risk of engaging in criminal behavior later in life and contributing to a cycle of violence.

Our network of public and private agency partners connects trained adults with child victims in need of trauma counseling, parenting support and other family assistance.

Our Goals:

- Prevent children's exposure to violence
- Minimize the negative impacts of exposure when it does occur
- Spread awareness about this issue in our community

Methods:

Community Mobilization: Mobilize neighborhood stakeholders, including youth and families, to change their attitudes related to violence and encourage support to reduce children's exposure to violence.

Universal and Indicated Prevention: Establish a community-wide awareness and social marketing campaign and provide site-based services to help prevent children's exposure to violence.

Intensive and Early Intervention: Identify and connect children exposed to violence to appropriate therapeutic or other interventions to help them heal from trauma.

Replication: Establish a model that can be adopted throughout the county by creating change, such as policy reform.

The Work

DCI-NOVA selected the Frayser-Raleigh and Hickory Hill neighborhoods as focus areas for our work because they exhibited high rates of domestic violence. We built a foundation to create a trauma-informed community, bringing together professionals and community members wishing to increase their knowledge of how to better provide care for families.

Our network of partners held monthly meetings to create awareness and build service capacity by networking among themselves. We sponsored professional trainings about specific social services topics and the impact of violence on children.

Additional Work Includes (But is not limited to):

- Helping to expand “Stewards of Children,” Memphis Child Advocacy Center’s training for volunteers to help educate the community about preventing and recognizing signs of child sexual abuse.
- Creating a curriculum to train Shelby County Schools’ coaches to help young male athletes practice respect towards themselves and others, and build respectful, non-violent relationships.
- Coordinating the Men Healing Men Network to support and engage of community members and professionals help men and boys of color in violence prevention through trainings that cover a variety of topics
- Training and Mentoring for Childcare Providers using the Le Bonheur Community Health and Well- Being curriculum provides social and emotional development training and support for staff and parents at 28 childcare centers. This work is now a strategy under the Shelby County Early Childhood Education Plan and one of its goals is supporting an infant mental health initiative in target neighborhoods.
- Increasing the scope of work for Victims to Victory, which now includes information about children when providing services to adult family members affected by homicide.

Next Steps

A public campaign to raise awareness of children’s exposure to violence will launch September 2016. Going forward, the University of Tennessee Health Science Center will lead the work to further provide resources and access to children and families in Shelby County through specialized programs, trainings and social work initiatives thanks to the foundational work of our community partners.

Our Partners

Agape Child and Family Services	Memphis Child Advocacy Center
The Center for Community Building and Neighborhood Action	Shelby County Office of Early Childhood and Youth
Consilience Group, LLC	University of Memphis
The Exchange Club Family Center	Department of Social Work
The Family Safety Center	University of Tennessee, Boling Center for Developmental Disabilities
Le Bonheur Community Health & Wellbeing	Victims to Victory
Memphis and Shelby County Juvenile Court	
Memphis Area Women’s Council	

www.defendingchildhoodshelby.org

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